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TELEVISION IN THE SERVICE OF FLES TEACHER TRAINING--THE ISU FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROJECT.

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AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY, SENIOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION STUDENTS SERVED AS RESOURCE PERSON TRAINEES (RPTS) IN A PROJECT DESIGNED TO PREPARE THEM TO BECOME EITHER FULL-TIME TEACHERS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (FLES) OR REGULAR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS WHO COULD BE ABLE TO ASSIST IN FLES INSTRUCTION PRESENTED THROUGH AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA. THE RPTS, WHO HAD A MINIMUM OF 19 HOURS OF SPANISH AND A METHODS COURSE, WERE ASSIGNED AS DRILL LEADERS TO THIRD-, FOURTH-, AND FIFTH-GRADE CLASSES IN WHICH INSTRUCTION IN SPANISH WAS GIVEN BY TELEVISION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP). THEIR DUTIES INCLUDED CONDUCTING A 5-MINUTE DRILL SESSION AFTER EACH 10-MINUTE TELEVISION LESSON, MAKING SURE THAT ALL PUPILS PARTICIPATED IN THE TELEVISION LESSON, AND SERVING AS LIAISON PERSONS BETWEEN THE PUPILS AND THE TELEVISION TEACHER. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SPANISH CLASSES WAS COMPARED WITH THAT OF FRENCH CLASSES TAUGHT BY A SPECIALIST IN THE FLES PROGRAM ALREADY OPERATING IN THE SCHOOL (CONTROL GROUP). THOUGH FINAL RESULTS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE, THERE ARE ENCOURAGING REPORTS REGARDING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP IN PRONUNCIATION, COMPREHENSION, STRUCTURE, AND ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR THE MODERN LANGUAGE CONFERENCE, "AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS IN TEACHER PREPARATION" (29TH, DECEMBER 28, 1965). (AM)

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TELEVISION IN THE SERVICE OF FLES TEACHER TRAINING
(The ISU Foreign Language Project)

by

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The Project

In 1960-61 the faculty of Illinois State University (ISU) received considerable encouragement from its administration to engage in meaningful research, which would involve the two affiliated laboratory institutions: The Metcalf Elementary School and the University High School. The project which I prepared and submitted for approval, in the fall of 1961, was as follows:

Let us start teaching a second foreign language, Spanish, at the Metcalf School. Whereas French should continue to be taught by the French teacher, who is physically present in the classroom, Spanish should be taught for an experimental period of two years via ISU'S closed circuit television system (CCTV). Though French was hitherto begun in the fifth grade, it was recommended that we should start in both foreign languages on the third-grade level. In testing achievement in TV teaching of Spanish for a period of two years, the French track at the Metcalf School would act as a control group in determining understanding, speaking, motivation, cultural knowledge, and fidelity in pronunciation. National norms in achievement were also to be used, if available, at the conclusion of the project. A Spanish control group would have been proposed if it had been available locally. The project in teaching Spanish was viewed as an extension of the experiment in CCTV teaching by Professor Fred P. Ellison and his associates at the University of Illinois.[2] To me the most notable but least surprising result of that experiment was that to school children the TV instruction, was a cold and impersonal medium which was impeding the learning of a second language.

To make TV instruction in foreign languages more effective, I proposed that we place Resource Person trainees (RPT) in each of the classrooms which were to receive CCTV instruction. Such a trainee was to be a college senior in elementary education, who would have used all his electives, approximately 19 semester hours, towards a mastery of foreign language. Hopefully, such a student would enter ISU with an advanced standing in Spanish, that is,

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1 Chairman, Department of German; formerly Head, Department of Foreign Languages, Illinois State University.

2 Ellison, Fred P. The University of Illinois Experiment in FLES- A Progress Report, University of Illinois, Foreign Language Instruction Project, November 1960, 4 pages (mimeographed).- Apparently all audio-visual foreign language instruction media are rather ineffective without a "follow-up" by a trained person. CF. Randall, Earle. "The Use of Television in Teaching FLES," The DFL Bulletin, NEA, February 1965, p.1.

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with 2-4 years of high-school Spanish behind him. His college preparation in that language would include Spanish Phonetics, Advanced Spanish Conversation and Composition, and under all circumstances a special methods course: Spanish for the Elementary School. A pronunciation test in Spanish, passed with excellent results, was to be a prerequisite for becoming an RPT. An RPT's practical work in teaching a foreign-language class were to be evaluated as two semester hours which would contribute to the required total of eight semester hours in practice teaching.

The TV teacher of Spanish was to have a practice session with all the trainees prior to each of the broadcasts. During these sessions the material to be covered during the broadcast and during the follow-up period was to be thoroughly rehearsed. The TV instructor was to pay close attention to good pronunciation of all the material to be covered by the trainees. I proposed that the telecasts should last 15 minutes and the follow-up periods 10 minutes. During the latter the pupils were to be drilled by the RPTs on structures uttered during the telecasts. Above all, the RPTs, by being with the children during and after the telecasts, were to lend the necessary personal contact to the learning situation.

The problem of articulation from the third grade through the twelfth was considered. If the trial instruction by TV were not to succeed, it was proposed that we proceed by "live" FLES instruction through the sixth grade. Glastonbury (A-LM)-type instructional material would be introduced in the seventh grade and continued in the University High School. On the other hand, if we were to succeed with the CCTV experiment, we were to continue it beyond the trial period of two years through the sixth grade, video taping- if possible- each lesson for possible future use. In starting the project the Spanish tract, consisting of a third grade and a fourth grade class, would receive the same CCTV instruction.

Finally, from the RPTs' point of view, their preparation in Spanish, their methods courses, and their contact with CCTV teaching of Spanish was to prepare them:

1. As qualified elementary school teachers, who could assist audio-visual media, such as films and TV (including Airborne Instruction) in teaching foreign languages in particularly those elementary schools which could not find or could not afford a fully trained FLES teacher.

2. As RPs to help schools plan their foreign language programs, particularly those which include film and video tape. An RP would also serve as a consultant and interpreter of these programs to parents and teachers.

3. As full-time FLES teachers by taking a limited number of additional courses either before or after employment. This was to be a desirable goal, especially if interest in a foreign language by pupils, parents, and teachers were to be awakened by means of a trial period of audio-visual instruction in the same foreign language by the RP himself.

Execution

The project of training prospective elementary school teachers as RPs in the CCTV instruction of Spanish was approved by the administration and it was publicly announced at the Foreign Language Teaching Materials Symposium, which was held on our campus on December 16, 1961.[3] The most pressing task

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3 Horvay, Frank D. "The Foreign Language Teaching Sequence at ISNU," Teacher Education, December 1962, p. 24.

was to find a suitable teacher to carry out the project, an educator whose personality and preparation was equally suited for grade-school children as it was for college seniors. Mr. Frank M. Figueroa, who was born in Porto Rico, received his M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University and had experience both in teaching and with audio-visual media, was interviewed by me at the MLA meeting in 1961 and ideally suited the need. He was promised and given virtually a free hand in guiding the project, which was to last from the fall of 1962 to May 1964.

In planning for approximately 180 broadcasts for the first year of the project, Mr. Figueroa adopted for TV use Margit Mac Rae's Mi cuaderno de español, Book One, supplementing it with stories and dialogues of his own creation. He made imaginative use of visual aids such as cutouts, pictures, drawings, and puppets.[4] He varied the pace of the telecasts by appearing either alone on the screen or by acting out scenes with the help of RPTs and Spanish-speaking members of the faculty. In accordance with the project outline, the trainees were carefully briefed by Mr. Figueroa before each broadcast, and all new structures and lexical elements were rehearsed. Quoting from Mr. Figueroa's progress report:

> During the telecast the RPTs led the class in repeating words and phrases when appropriate and in general made sure that the whole class was participating actively in the lesson. After each telecast the RPTs conducted a five-minute drill on the material presented in the television lesson. They also acted as liaison between the television instructor and the children, keeping him informed of classroom reaction to his lesson by means of a "feedback report" completed after each lesson. This information helped the instructor make proper adjustments in his presentations.[5]

ISU's main contribution to the project was Mr. Figueroa himself and the CCTV facilities which were placed at the project's disposal. In other respects, the University's co-operation could have been more tactful and generous. For example, Mr. Figueroa was given the incredibly small budget of $40 a year for materials. To justify his salary we were asked to include into the instruction a class of fifth graders, in addition to one third and one fourth grade class, as originally recommended. Adding an extra class was educationally unsound, since the telecasts could not embrace well three age groups. This led to the continuous difficulty of insufficient an number of RPTs for the three classes, especially since each of the trainees was to have this experience for only nine weeks. To enable Mr. Figueroa to continue the project, he either had to talk some of the trainees into staying on with the project on a voluntary basis or, on occasion, request Spanish majors to act as trainees. The telecast was cut from the proposed 15 minutes to 10 minutes and the follow-up from 10 minutes to 5 minutes. The telecast was scheduled by the administration for the last and possibly the worst

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[4] For details on the objectives and content of the TV course in Spanish write to Professor Frank M. Figueroa, Florida Presbyterian College, St. Petersburg, Florida for a copy of his progress report En Español por favor, 10 pages and appendices (typed).

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

period of the day, from 2.40 P.M. to 2.50 P.M. For many of the children this instruction came right after a period of swimming, and thus they were both excited and exhausted. One day Mr. Figueroa found himself the victim of an incredible logistical slip-up: Without notifying him, his office was turned into a janitor's lounge, and all his carefully prepared visual aids were piled helter-skelter on his desk which had been shoved into a corner.

Evaluation

To measure the pupils' achievement two members of the Department of Foreign Languages, Mr. Sidney N. Zelson, representing the experimental group, and Mrs. Marcelle F. D'Abbracci, the instructor of the control group, collaborated on the preparation of a series of tests. Although I have not yet received the final results of these tests, the preliminary report was most encouraging in regard to the level of achievement in pronunciation, comprehension, and knowledge of structure by the experimental group.[6] Mr. Zelson should also be given credit for devising an attitude test towards foreign languages. The purpose of the test was to compare the attitude of the three groups similar in age: The experimental group, the control group, and a third which received no instruction in a foreign language. Especially the following items pertaining to the experimental group, are of interest:

	Grades:	3	4	5	Total:
. . .					
3. I would like to have Mr. Figueroa teach us:					
	in person.....	8	12	10	30
	on TV.....	16	13	14	43
4. I would like to spend:					
	more time.....	12	16	22	50
	less time.....	3	1	--	4
	the same amount of time...	9	9	2	20
learning a foreign language.					
.....					
6. I would like.....		4	9	6	19
I would like very much.....		19	16	18	53
I would not care.....		1	1	0	2
to visit a country where Spanish is spoken.					
. . .					
9. I believe that it is:					
	important.....	13	19	16	48
	very important.....	10	7	8	25
	not important.....	1	0	0	1
to know how to speak a foreign language.					

There was constant evaluation of the performance and personality of the trainees. This was done by Mr. Figueroa himself, by Mr. Zelson or another member of the Spanish staff present during the telecast, by the regular teacher in whose class the telecast was taking place, and periodically by me.

Conclusion

The project was directed towards development of teaching techniques with TV, which would at least equal in their results of the more conventional FLES methods. An attempt in this direction was clearly necessary because of the scarcity of qualified and certified grade-school teachers of foreign languages.

6 Ibid., p. 8 ff.

TV was thought to have the potential of accomplishing the staggering task of training, for example, 4000 teachers of foreign languages in California for about a million pupils who began their foreign language lessons this fall.[7] In California a crash program for teachers with no prior training in foreign languages, was perhaps unavoidable because of the legislative decision there in 1961. But we at ISU felt that we could proceed on a more sound basis and at a more leisurely pace. Although the testing of our pupils taught by telecast and assisted by RPTs remained incomplete, there can be no doubt about the success of the project. Each RPT was interviewed by me at the completion of his assignment to the project, especially in regard to hisown estimate of what he has learned. According to the trainees their practical training using audio-visuals, the teaching experience following the telecasts, and the course Spanish for the Elementary School were most enjoyable and invaluable. That from the trainees' point of view the project succeeded can be demonstrated by the fact that of the six elementary majors who graduated in 1963 as Resource Persons in Spanish, five are now making use of their skill in their present teaching situations.

Recommendations

Projecting the results of this experiment, I would recommend to institutions engaged in training elementary school teachers that they commence similar programs whereby interested and qualified students could use their electives to become RPs in foreign language. A college or a university need not have an expensive CCTV system for starting such a program. A project for RPs similar to the one I have described, could be based, for example, on the films of the Parlons Francais material. Not every elementary school, for some time to come, will be able to afford a qualified foreign language teacher. However, the possibility already exists that several schools could jointly enjoy, via telecasts, expert foreign language instruction. Elementary school teachers, trained as RPs in foreign languages, would be able to add the necessary skill and personal touch to make the foreign language classes based on TV or films a valuable experience for the participants.

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7 A very helpful pamphlet for understanding the situation in California is the one prepared for the 1963 meeting of Conference 29: Presta, Peter. The "Español para maestros" Project, 6 pages (mimeographed).

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